

# The World and the Kingdom of God

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The words of our Lord in the seventh and in the fifth of Matthew. Enter ye in at the straight gate. For wide is the gate any many there be which go in there at, because straight is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life and few there be that find it. Not everyone that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name, and in Thy name hath cast out devils, and in Thy name done many wonderful works. And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you. Depart from Me ye that work iniquity. Therefore, whosoever heareth these sayings of Mine and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man which built his house upon a rock. And the rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew and beat upon that house, and it fell not for it was founded upon a rock. And everyone that heareth these sayings of mine and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man which built his house upon sand. And the rain descended and the floods came and the winds blew and beat upon that house and it fell. And great was the fall of it.

Then, a passage in Matthew 5:29,30. And if thy right hand offend thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee. For it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee. For it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.

Now, when the seasons roll around, the feast times, fast times on the Christian calendar, so called, I like to simplify and say now, what would I tell a stranger? What would I tell a man or a woman from some land that had never heard of Christ or the Bible or Christianity? There aren't many anymore, but what would I tell them anyway? So today, I want to talk just a little about the world and the kingdom of God, and how important it is that we should enter the kingdom from the world, and how.

Now, to our Lord Jesus Christ, salvation was a very simple thing. He saw very clearly and He spoke very simply. And here's the state of affairs as our Lord explained it in the verses which I have read. Now, naturally, I will say more than He said, because there would be no reason to preach if we didn't. We hope we stay within the framework of what He said and extend what He said, but do not change it. But here's what our Lord said in His earthly teaching. He said, that the world is full of sinners. And He defined sinners at various times as being lost as a sheep is lost, he said. Out in the wilderness, as away from home as a runaway boy is away from home, as perishing as a

drowning man sinking for the last time, as being guilty as a rebel is guilty who rises against his country.

Now Jesus is very kind and was and still is very kind. He's not changed. But because we need kindness so much, there is a danger that we should overplay the kindness and should forget that He said some very severe things too. I suppose that you can hear all up and down this country from, as the politicians would say, from the rock-bound coast of Maine to the sunny slopes of California. And you will not hear for the next two weeks one lone word that Jesus ever spoke that was severe or that was a warning. You will hear only the nice things He said. But the fact is, He said that sinners are lost, that the world is a land of darkness fallen off from God, as a planet that has left its central sun, and that in this world dwells the mortal enemy to our souls, the devil and sin. And that here human beings in this fallen, dark world, suffer without recompense and shed tears without reward and toil without permanence.

These are the three things that our Lord came to change in the world out there, in that kingdom that we call the world. You know it, we know it, whether it's barbarism, hedonism, civilization, what it may be. We call it the world and it's well named of populated cities and countries and towns, populated, organized loosely, and held together. And they suffer, but without recompense.

And our Lord came that men might suffer and have reward for it. And they shed tears without any reward to follow. And our Lord came that we might shed tears and those tears, everyone, should be diamonds in the coronet of God. And here, men toil without permanence, and everything they do passes away. But our Lord came in order that we might toil with permanence, for he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.

Now, that's the world out there and you're pretty familiar with it. It won't let you alone. It comes into your living room. It flashes its lights at you from the shopping centers. It comes and is thrown onto your porch as a newspaper. It's up and down the streets everywhere with its horns honking and yelling out at each other as they go up and down, at least down on our street, making a speedway out of it. The world won't let you alone. The world with its toil and it's tears and it's suffering. But without permanence and without reward and without recompense, that lost, frightened away from home, guilty and perishing world is the world into which Jesus came. Now, over against that, and as we say now, coexisting with it, that is, existing parallel with it in time so that it can be entered now by the soul, is another kingdom we call the kingdom of God. I read about it to you. And of that kingdom, Christ of whom we sung is the Lord and arbiter.

Now, that's the teaching of Christianity. That's what the Bible says. That's what our Lord Himself said, that this kingdom of God that Jesus Christ is the Lord and arbiter of that kingdom. And that into that kingdom, because they coexist and parallel each other like two buildings standing side by

side with doors, gates that you can enter; because it's true that these kingdoms, the kingdom of this world and the kingdom of God coexist.

Therefore, we can enter into the kingdom of God from the kingdom of the world. If there was a vast gulf separating, or if one had existed and then perished, and the other one had come on later, it would be impossible to enter from one into another. But now says Jesus, it's entirely possible to enter the kingdom of God from the kingdom of the world; the same Person to have dwelt in both, first in the kingdom of the world, and then in the kingdom of God. And the same Person then afterwards that dwells in both simultaneously. His physical body and His earthly part of Him shall dwell and does dwell in this kingdom of the world. But His heavenly part of Him, His spiritual part, enters the kingdom of God and dwells there.

So that like our Lord, who said He had nowhere to lay his head and like Paul who traveled around in this oft, he's in this world's kingdom, but he's given up the things that made this world's kingdom evil. He's given up lostness. He's no longer lost, he is found. He's no longer away from home, he's come back. He's no longer perishing, he's saved. He's no longer guilty, he's forgiven. And still, the physical and natural part of him remains here on Earth in this world of darkness. And here, instead of suffering without recompense, God gives him joy for every suffering. Here, instead of shedding tears without reward, God gives him great recompense for all of his tears. And here, instead of toiling without permanence, he's working co-laborer with God, building and working and laboring with God Almighty.

But now, this kingdom is entered, said Jesus, this new kingdom of heaven, of the Spirit, is entered out of the world, but it's entered only one way. There are not, as the world says, a dozen ways to get into it. You can get into it according to the world which doesn't know, any one of a dozen ways. You can get cultured into it, educated into it, born into it by nature, or you can get into it by cultivating your good part and putting down the bad part, doing good deeds. They have very many ways of getting in. But our Lord says there's only one gate out of the old kingdom of the world into the kingdom of God. And that is, by Jesus Christ, our Lord, by way of the cross, now escaped from the dark land, and entrance into the blessed Kingdom is by one, lone gate, I repeat. And Jesus said that it was a small gate and a straight one. And it's always necessary to explain that by straight, he didn't mean straight, like a foot rule. He meant tight, narrow.

And so, that gate is very narrow. And our Lord shows the bleak, deep, utter ruin of the world, and He shows the wondrous everlasting delight of those who come into the kingdom of God. And He says that nothing dare prevent our entering. The cuddly, little Jesus that the world talks about with His kind thoughts and His peace on earth, is not the same One who warned us that we should not allow anything to prevent us from entering this kingdom, this eternal and permanent kingdom.

And He said, if we allow anything to prevent us from entering the New Kingdom, we're doomed. He said, that there should be no compromise at all. He said that there is no easy way of getting in. That is, we've explained not any two ways, but one way. And it is through one gate, a cross-shaped gate, and it is a very narrow gate. And it is a gate you can't drive a trailer through. You can go through, but you can't push a wheelbarrow through. You've got to leave your stuff outside. It's a narrow gate just big enough for the individual to come. And He says, there will be no compromise.

Does it sound a bit strange and off-key to hear that this baby Jesus grew up and said to people, if your right hand gets in your way you had better chop it off than to go to hell? You'd better enter the kingdom of God with one hand than go to hell with two. Doesn't it sound strange that this Jesus should say, if your eye offends thee, reach in and pluck your eye out rather than with two eyes go into hell. That's what He said nevertheless. And He said, that we should leave if we have to, father and mother and wife and children and life itself that we might leave the old, fallen, lost, perishing, guilty kingdom of the world and enter into this new kingdom of which He is the head. Now that's what Jesus said, and that's what everybody's yelling about, but we don't know it in this day.

Now, if Jesus Christ knew, and there are millions of people all up and down the world that believe Jesus Christ knew; and they have proof that He knew, proof which others may not accept, but which they do accept and which is satisfying to them. Proof, that there exists for every man a critical emergency. That we are not simply to lean back and sing Christmas carols, whatever sweet they may be, and not simply go shopping to give gifts, and that's a delightful custom and I wouldn't stop it though I think it could be wised up a bit. But nevertheless, I don't want to be the old Scrooge that says the baby shouldn't have a toy and Aunt Mabel shouldn't have a new scarf. I don't want to do it. But I only say that it's over-done a bit I think.

Now, until we have left the old world in our hearts and entered the blessed gate of the kingdom of God, we're in grave danger of what the Bible calls the second death. Now that's what He said. And that's as much a part of Christmas as the Babe in the manger and holy night, silent night. For the One who was born said that. That's what He came to say. That's the message He has for mankind. He has a message of peace on earth to men of goodwill, but He also has a very critical message, a message of critical emergency; that there exists two kingdoms, one perishing and one eternal, one lost and one found, one natural and one spiritual, one blessed of God and the other under the curse. And they exist paralleling each other and touching, coexisting, and that there is a narrow gate--cross-shaped--which will allow you to leave the old kingdom and enter into the new one forever. And anybody can come, black or white or red or yellow, or old or young or rich or poor or cultured or a barbarian, or Scythian or bondman or Greek or Jew around the world, at anytime, anywhere. They can leave the old kingdom and enter the new. And until he does, each man is in grave danger of so arranging it and so setting things up, that he'll never enter the new kingdom at all, but will perish with the old kingdom.

It's as though, take two great ships at sea that were to get in radio contact with one another. And one ship would say, we have sprung a leak and there's nothing we can do about it. It's too huge and we haven't the materials. We can't stop it. We have, we judge, about two hours to get our passengers and crew off. And another great ship pulls up close to it and a proper way of getting across is set up. And those who want to do it, can come across from the sinking ship into the one that isn't sinking. And after all that come that will come, then the unwounded ship, the great ship, will reverse her motors and roar away at a safe distance and watch the great, old, wounded vessel go down, great, old noble wide thing, plunge into the sea. But everybody that would leave her could leave her. And everybody that had wisdom enough to do it, could cross over the improvised gang plank and could be safe on board the great unwounded ship. And so, with a change of direction, life nevertheless could go on their way to port.

Now, that's exactly as it is changing the figure a bit, out on the great, great, sea of life. Two mighty ships are near to each other, within touch. And one of them is wounded unto death. And she's leaking and listing and going down. But the other great, wide ship appeared. It was the Old Ship Zion the colored brethren sing about. And the old ship of Zion pulled into sight, and the, ahoy there, sounded from the deck. And it's, come on over, come on off the wounded, sinking vessel. And it's a strange thing that they won't come, only one now, and one again.

Strange thing isn't it, that it costs millions of dollars to keep churches and evangelists and preachers going and missionaries to try to coax people off of a sinking vessel. And yet that's exactly what we're faced in the day in which we live. We're faced with the incongruent situation of a ship going down and another ship unwounded and ready to receive all passengers and crew. And yet only one and again will come across. And yet she's sinking, settling deeper in the water and the stern beginning to go down, and obviously should plunge soon. And yet we have to coax and sing and pray and work and do personal work and beg to get people off that sinking ship onto the unwounded ship which will soon be in the harbor with all hands safe and all passengers perfectly well. Yet, that's where we are.

And Jesus our Lord says, there's a critical emergency. The great old ship we call the kingdom of this world has hit a reef and she's leaking badly and she's listing, and nothing on her decks are never level. They're always crooked and everything on her is crooked, and it'll only be a matter of time in the fulfillment of the prophecies and the sound of the voices of the sages and seers gone by. All are focused on us now and all the sounds are coming from the past ages to tell us that before very long that great old ship will go down.

And yet, we have to coax people to come and beg them to get off a sinking ship. That's because the parallel won't hold and because the illustration is imperfect, because anybody on a sinking vessel would want to live. But the sinner thinks he does live. And part of his very lostness is, he doesn't recognize that the deck is not level and that the ship is settling in the water. Part of his very

lostness and part of his very blindness and darkness is that he doesn't know how lost he is and how soon he'll plunge down. But for everyone that will there is a gate that stands ajar. And through its portals, beaming rich mercies from the cross afar, the Savior's love revealing. O depths of mercy can it be, that gate was left ajar for me?

Now, any consideration of Christ is ruled out our Lord says. The emergency is so great on that sinking ship, if a man was bringing back antiques from Africa or artwork from Paris, he'd be very happy to leave them on the sinking vessel and escape with his skin and his suit and no more. Perhaps a toothbrush and a change of garment, that's all. And if he had to leave them behind, he'd do it. And so, our Lord says the emergency is so great that everyone should at once give up all, even the last price if they have to, physical death in order that they might save that inner man which is all that's worth saving.

Now, is that a dark picture? No, my brother, it's not a dark picture. For we are saved unto the glory that excelleth. And that great, wide ship that lies there so easy and graceful with her great motors hidden there and her great screws ready to propel her swiftly to a safe harbor, she would take them all in. And the glory and the wonder that excelleth are to be found there.

Or to change the figure again, let us move over out of that old dark world and let us enter the new kingdom of God and let us start our pilgrim journey. Let us start our journey toward that new heaven and new earth which before very long we shall see.

Now, I want to do what I rarely do. I know some preachers quote and read until people don't like to hear them, and I try to spare my audience. But I do want to read you something here too beautiful, too beautiful for me to keep to myself. I wrote a long time ago about the man I call the saintly silk weaver, Tersteegen. The German suit weaver who spent his time weaving silk, but who spent his off hours in prayer writing hymns as sweet and smooth and wonderful as silk. And one that he wrote was called, the Pilgrim's Song. Let me read it. Those who don't like hymns, why, you bear with me and excuse me.

But those who do, why, you listen for I don't do this often. But I hear this dear old German. Now, he never spoke a word of English of course. And if you heard him speak, you'd hear the great heavy, deep, musical and guttural voice of a German speaking. But they translated into English for us. And here we have it about as he wrote it in English. It's called, A Pilgrim's Song.

On! O beloved children, the evening is at hand. And desolate and fearful a solitary land. Take heart, the rest eternal awaits our weary feet. From strength to strength, press onward; the end, how wondrous sweet. Lo, we can tread rejoicing, the narrow pilgrim road. We know the voice that calls us, we know our faithful God. Come children on to glory, with every face set fast toward the golden towers where we shall rest at last.

Now listen to this description of our world in which we live. Listen to it. The praising and the blaming, the storehouse and the mart, the morning and the feasting, the glory and the art. The wisdom and the cunning, we've left amid the gloom. We may not look behind us for we are going home.

That's what we've got now, isn't it? The praising and the blaming and the calling names in the United Nations, and bitter editorials in the newspapers cussing out some governor or mayor. The praising and the blaming, or maybe it's only shouting an angry abuse across the back fence because you let your hose run or your dog bark? The praising and the blaming, the storehouse and the mart, the morning and the feasting, the glory and the art. The wisdom and the cunning left far amid the gloom. We may not look behind us for we are going home. Oh, speed, unburdened pilgrims, glad empty-handed free. Why are we empty handed these pilgrims? Well, partly because they've taken most everything away from us. And partly because we gave the rest of it away.

I remember what my dear, old daddy said. He'd only been converted a short time and the kingdom of God was very puzzling to him and so completely backwards from everything he'd known for 60 years. And he said about my older brother and myself, the younger brother was then too young to count. So he only mentioned two of us. I had been converted a while and he'd watch me operate. And he said, I don't understand it all. He said I have two sons. One of them makes all the money he can make and saves all he can save and the other won't take anything, and what he gets he gives away. He said I don't understand it.

Well, that's not true only of me and it isn't all together true, but it's true of all God's children. To speed unburden pilgrims glad empty-handed free; couldn't bring much with you to cross the trackless deserts and walk upon the sea. The strangers among strangers, no home beneath the sun; how soon the wanderings ended, the endless rest begun. We pass the children playing for evening shades fall fast. That's an allusion to Jesus saying the children are playing in the marketplace. Sadly, he saw the children playing in the marketplace. Don't be angry with them friends. Don't feel superior to them. Don't feel contempt. They're the children playing in the marketplace out there among the shadows.

Bob Hope is playing out there and making people giggle. And they're paying him frightful, great salaries for it. And Jack Benny's still doing it. He's still 39 and still making everybody laugh. And we add a new clown every year and a new star every year. And an old star dies somewhere in a boarding house forgotten, then a new star shines in her physical beauty for a little while. Still the children are playing. We pass the children playing for evening shades fall fast. We pass the wayside flowers toward God's paradise at last. If now the path be narrow and steep and rough and lone, if crags and tangles cross, it prays, God we're going home. We follow in his footsteps.

What if our feet be torn? Where He has marked a pathway, all hail the briar and thorn. All hail the briar and thorn, he says. I see the footstep of Jesus and what did I get my foot caught? Scares seen, scares heard, unreckoned, despised, defamed, unknown or heard but by our singing, O children, hurry on.

Brother, do you get that line? We're heard but by our singing. And I walked around up in my study just before service and I was as near being blessed as a tough old fellow like I can be. To think that there are the children of God, the true children of God and mostly they're overlooked.

Now, the philosophy of evangelicalism is now, that if you can get a big wig to but trim his wig and parade him for everybody to see and say he's a Christian. But they're never known for their Christianity. They're known for something else. A politician, he's a Christian, but he's never known because he's a Christian. He's known because he's a politician. A movie actor goes to a prayer meeting in the morning. He's known because he's an actor, not because he goes to a prayer meeting. An athlete wins the decathlon and he's a Christian, all right. He's not known because he's a Christian, he's known because he wins the decathlon.

So, all up and down the world, the modern philosophy is, a big shot is a Christian. Let's yell about it. But they're never able to put it across, because the fellow they're talking about is never known because he's a Christian. He's known because he's something else. Then they tag Christianity on to him to try to suck what little goodie they can out of his testimony.

But this old man of God who wove silk and prayer, he knew better. He knew better brethren, there's no question about it. He had more sense than all of us today. He said scares seen, scares heard, unreckoned, despised, defamed unknown, and heard but by our singing. O children hurry on. We're only heard because we sing. I tell you I want that to be true. Like the bird that Milton wrote about, the bird of night sings darkling, he said. There in the shadows unseen, but she's there and how do they know she's there? She's there because while the shadows hide her form, out from her sweet, melodious throat, there floats the music of that gifted bird.

And so, the children of God are known only for their singing. Wonderful, isn't it? I think wonderful. I got to do something with that. That's too good to let die. God's children are not known for any, and they're not because they're Christian. They're known for something else all right, but not known because they're Christians. If you say, I'm born again, everybody looks embarrassed and turns away. But if you sing they'll at least know you're around. We're known but by our singing. Thank God, my friends.

So, our Lord did not leave us on a low note. He began on one, but He left us on the high, high crescendo. Would that be a good word. I want to use a musical term meaning high and beautiful and sparkly, for that's it. The glory that excelleth. And it's out there before us. And so, every time



you hear a bell, even if it's over a country store like this we pass down here at 69th and Halsted Street. Since October, they've been playing out of a loudspeaker, way out of focus and off-key, they've been playing Christmas songs.

Even if you hear a bell ringing or see an old fat Santa Claus, let it remind you that there is something real back of all this even if the world doesn't know it. There was one who came to tell us that these two kingdoms coexist, that you could enter one from the other by way of the cross. And having entered then, you're a pilgrim on your way to the holy, permanent, happy land, singing as you go, overlooked, forgotten, despised, but nevertheless heard through your singing while you go on your way to heaven. Praise be to God above. Amen.